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INFORMATION ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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COUNTRY Indochina/Siam

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SUBJECT Foreign Trade of Viet Nam:  
Udon-Nghe An Province Trade Route

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SUPPLEMENT TO  
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1. Trade between the province of Nghe-An (Annam)\* and Siam via Laos and Udon has been very flourishing during the past few months, the dry season in that area. The arrival of the rainy season will lessen this traffic considerably. The Viet Minh attempts to gain as much as possible through this traffic.\*\*
2. The trip from Udon to Vinh (province of Nghe-An) takes around 15 days. The return trip requires about the same length of time. Travellers usually remain around one month in Vinh.
3. The Viet Minh recently created a special committee which deals solely with commercial matters. Most of the travellers that use the Udon-Nghe-An route are merely traders, chosen and designated by the special committee of the Viet Minh to deal in commerce.
4. Medicines, particularly penicillin, are the principal products transported into Viet Nam. The main Vietnamese export along this route is opium, usually in the form of morphine because raw opium is too heavy and voluminous for the trip. Formerly, gold was also transported but it has been recently noted that gold is more expensive in Indochina and the shipment of gold from Viet Nam to Siam has ceased. Each traveller along the route can usually carry around 20 kilos. The trip is made on foot, usually in groups of from 5 to 10.
5. Along the Udon-Nghe-An route there are also "troupes de fantomes" who engage in arms traffic. These groups usually range from 40-80 men in number and frequently engage in battles with French troops in the course of their trip.
6. Political missions, both Viet Minh and foreign (for example Burmese, Laotian) use the Udon-Nghe-An route.\*\*\*

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Comment: Nghe-An province is the center of interzones #4. The Vietnamese commander in this area is Nguyen Son, former commander in Quang Ngai province. Nghe-An is also important as a center for trade between South China and Viet Nam.

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Washington Comment. SO 22514 discussed trade between South China and Viet Nam and the importance of Nghe-An province in this traffic.

Source Comment. There is also a route in use between Ubon, Siam and Quang Ngai. This route is used mainly in the movement of troops, arms, and political missions. Because the Quang Ngai area is not as rich as Interzone #4 (Nghe-An province area), there is not the extent of trade as in the case of the Udon-Nghe-An route.

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